

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 1 1. A method for controlling a stand-by braking torque applied
2 to an automotive vehicle under a condition of approaching or
3 following an obstacle preceding the vehicle, the method
4 comprising:
5 determining a brake signal for brake pressure to apply a
6 brake torque, as a stand-by braking torque;
7 establishing at least one brake torque threshold;
8 monitoring the brake torque;
9 comparing the monitored brake torque with the
10 established brake torque threshold; and
11 modifying the brake signal in response to the comparing
12 the monitored brake torque with the established brake torque
13 threshold.
- 1 2. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein a braking system
2 is employed, which uses hydraulic brake fluid as working
3 medium, wherein the step of monitoring the brake torque
4 includes:
5 detecting pressure of the hydraulic brake fluid at a first
6 location within the braking system to generate a first output
7 signal indicative of the detected pressure at the first location;
8 detecting pressure of the hydraulic brake fluid at a second
9 location within the braking system to generate a second output
10 signal indicative of the detected pressure at the second location;
11 and
12 processing the first and second output signals to provide
13 at least one variable expressing one of characteristics of the
14 brake torque.
- 1 3. A system for controlling a stand-by braking torque

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2 applied to an automotive vehicle under a condition of
3 approaching or following an obstacle preceding the vehicle, the
4 system comprising:

5 an obstacle detection system for detecting a distance
6 between the vehicle and the obstacle preceding the vehicle;

7 a braking system for application, as a stand-by braking
8 torque, brake torque to the vehicle in response to a brake signal;
9 and

10 a controller for determining whether or not an operator
11 braking action to reduce the speed of the vehicle is imminent
12 under a condition of approaching or following an obstacle
13 preceding the vehicle based on the detected distance by the
14 detection system and a vehicle speed of the vehicle, determining
15 an initial value of brake torque, determining the brake signal for
16 the determined initial value of brake torque, applying the
17 determined brake signal to the braking system upon
18 determination that the operator braking action is imminent,
19 monitoring the brake torque applied to the vehicle, and
20 modifying the brake signal based on the monitored brake torque
21 after determination that the operator braking action is
22 imminent.

1 4. A system as claimed in claim 3, wherein the controller
2 determines a variable expressing instantaneous magnitude of
3 the brake torque, compares the determined variable with a
4 predetermined brake torque threshold, and effects operations to
5 modify the brake signal when the determined variable satisfies a
6 predetermined relationship with the predetermined brake
7 torque threshold.

1 5. A system as claimed in claim 4, wherein the controller
2 calculates a period of time during which the determined variable
3 stays greater than or equal to the predetermined brake torque

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7. A system as claimed in claim 3, wherein the controller determines a variable expressing instantaneous magnitude of the brake torque, compares the determined variable with a predetermined brake torque threshold, and effects operations to modify the brake signal when the determined variable satisfies a predetermined relationship with the predetermined brake torque threshold.

9. A system as claimed in claim 7, wherein the controller calculates period of time during which the determined variable stays less than or equal to the predetermined brake torque threshold, and adjusts the brake signal to increase the brake torque in response to the calculated period of time.

1 10. A system as claimed in claim 3, wherein the controller
2 determines a variable expressing time rate of change of

3 magnitude of the brake torque, compares the determined
4 variable with a predetermined brake torque threshold, and
5 reduces the brake signal to reduce the brake torque when the
6 determined variable is greater than or equal to the
7 predetermined brake torque threshold.

1 11. A system as claimed in claim 3, wherein the controller
2 determines a variable expressing time rate of change of
3 magnitude of the brake torque, compares the determined
4 variable with a predetermined brake torque threshold, and
5 increases the brake signal to increase the brake torque when the
6 determined variable is less than or equal to the predetermined
7 brake torque threshold.

1 12. A system as claimed in claim 3,
2 wherein the controller determines a first variable
3 expressing instantaneous magnitude of the brake torque,
4 compares the determined first variable with a predetermined
5 first brake torque threshold, and calculates a first period of time
6 during which the determined first variable stays greater than or
7 equal to the first predetermined brake torque threshold;

8 wherein the controller determines a second variable
9 expressing instantaneous magnitude of the brake torque,
10 compares the determined second variable with a predetermined
11 second brake torque threshold, and calculates a second period
12 of time during which the determined second variable stays less
13 than or equal to the predetermined second brake torque
14 threshold; and

15 wherein the controller subtracts the calculated second
16 period of time from the calculated first period of time to give a
17 difference, and adjusts the brake signal in response to the
18 difference.

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1 14. A system as claimed in claim 9, wherein the controller
2 adjusts the brake signal such that the longer the calculated
3 period of time, the greater the brake torque is.

1 14. A system as claimed in claim 9, wherein the controller
2 adjusts the brake signal such that the longer the calculated
3 period of time, the greater the brake torque is.

1 15. A system as claimed in claim 12, wherein the controller
2 adjusts the brake signal such that, in the event the difference is
3 positive, the greater the difference, the less the brake torque is,
4 while, in the event the difference is negative, the less the
5 difference, the greater the brake torque is.

1 16. A system as claimed in claim 13, wherein the braking
2 system employs hydraulic brake fluid as working medium, and a
3 first pressure sensor detects first pressure of the hydraulic brake
4 fluid of the braking system to generate a first output signal
5 indicative of the detected first pressure, and a second pressure
6 sensor detects second pressure of the hydraulic brake fluid of
7 the braking system to generate a second output signal.

1 17. A system as claimed in claim 16, wherein the controller
2 determines a maximum and a minimum of the first and second
3 output signals and uses one of the determined maximum and
4 minimum as a variable expressing instantaneous magnitude of
5 the brake torque.

1 18. A method for controlling a stand-by braking torque applied
2 to an automotive vehicle under a condition of approaching or
3 following an obstacle preceding the vehicle, the automotive
4 vehicle having a braking system for application of brake torque,
5 as a stand-by braking torque, to the vehicle in response to a

6 brake signal, the method comprising:
7 detecting a distance between the vehicle and the obstacle
8 preceding the vehicle;
9 determining whether or not an operator braking action to
10 reduce the speed of the vehicle is imminent under a condition of
11 approaching or following an obstacle preceding the vehicle
12 based on the detected distance by the detection system and a
13 vehicle speed of the vehicle;
14 determining an initial value of brake torque;
15 determining the brake signal for the determined initial
16 value of brake torque;
17 applying the determined brake signal to the braking
18 system upon determination that the operator braking action is
19 imminent;
20 monitoring the brake torque applied to the vehicle; and
21 modifying the brake signal based on the monitored brake
22 torque after determination that the operator braking action is
23 imminent.

1 19. A system for controlling a stand-by braking torque applied
2 to an automotive vehicle under a condition of approaching or
3 following an obstacle preceding the vehicle, comprising:
4 means for applying brake torque, as a stand-by braking
5 torque, to the vehicle in response to a brake signal;
6 means for detecting a distance between the vehicle and
7 the obstacle preceding the vehicle;
8 controller means for determining whether or not an
9 operator braking action to reduce the speed of the vehicle is
10 imminent under a condition of approaching or following an
11 obstacle preceding the vehicle based on the detected distance
12 by the detection system and a vehicle speed of the vehicle,
13 determining an initial value of brake torque, determining the
14 brake signal for the determined initial value of brake torque,

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20. An automotive vehicle comprising:
a detection system for detecting a distance between the vehicle and the obstacle preceding the vehicle;
a braking system for application of brake torque, as a stand-by braking torque, to the vehicle in response to a brake signal; and
a controller for determining whether or not an operator braking action to reduce the speed of the vehicle is imminent under a condition of approaching or following an obstacle preceding the vehicle based on the detected distance by the detection system and a vehicle speed of the vehicle, determining an initial value of brake torque, determining the brake signal for the determined initial value of brake torque, applying the determined brake signal to the braking system upon determination that the operator braking action is imminent, monitoring the brake torque applied to the vehicle, and modifying the brake signal based on the monitored brake torque after determination that the operator braking action is imminent.